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ABSTRACT

The Ontario Ministry of Education directive, Partners in Education, describes the purpose and the process for integrating the library resource center program with the school curriculum. It also provides implementation direction in the form of role descriptions for the teacher, teacher-librarian, principal, and board/system support staff. In this paper, a Coordinator of Media Services for the Brant County Board of Education discusses the development of a series of 11 documents designed to assist in achieving full implementation and continuance of the Partners in Action vision. "The Partners in Action...Growth Profile" defined the stages of development from entry to refined levels for the teacher and the teacher-librarian and defined the refined level for the principal. The involvement of senior administration, support staff, teachers, teacher-librarians, and principals in the collaborative process of initiation, development, validation, pilot testing, workshopping and facilitating the implementation of the documents went a long way to integrating the vision within the system thinking and action. The second factor in building commitment to the vision was the integration of the implementation initiative with the system curriculum approach and other system initiatives. The third key to the effective implementation was a planned approach that was flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities. A study was conducted with 10 elementary schools to review the effectiveness of the Growth Profile. (AEF)

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Sustaining the Vision in Brant County Board of Education in Ontario, Canada

by
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Introduction

This paper is about "Sustaining the Vision" of the Ontario Ministry of Education directive, *Partners in Action: The Library Resource Center in the School Curriculum* (1982), in one medium-sized county board of education in the province of Ontario, Canada, the Brant County Board of Education. It is about the CRDI (curriculum review, development and implementation) strategies that I have used to make that vision a part of the way the Brant County elementary schools think and operate. It is also about changing times and what needs to be done to sustain the vision in this rapidly evolving context.

Vision

The *Partners in Action* educational directive describes the purpose and the process for integrating the library resource center program with the school curriculum. It explains its purpose as helping learners to learn how to learn independently by interacting with a variety of resources, resource based learning. It describes the integration of information skills throughout the curriculum through the cooperative planning, teaching and evaluation of resource based programs by teachers and teacher-librarians, as its process.

Partners in Action also provides implementation direction in the form of role descriptions for the teacher, the teacher-librarian, the principal and board/system support staff. It provides a graphic picture of what the steps towards this approach will look like, in a transitional chart. *Partners in Action* describes the change from an isolated school library to a library resource center that is at the heart of the school curriculum.

Background

As Coordinator of Media Services for the Brant County Board of Education, I have focussed, over the last eight years, on attaining full implementation and continuance of *Partners in Action*. I have spent time studying change and curriculum implementation in preparation for my master's of education degree. From this I have concluded that for any vision to be embraced and effectively implemented in the school, it must be sanctioned and supported by authority. It must also be seen to work effectively within the culture and towards the general goals of the board or educational system. It must be clarified by and for those who must do it and it must offer clear, usable frameworks for understanding and implementation. Collaborative involvement in the development of tools for clarification and implementation goes a long way towards developing a common understanding and ownership of the vision.

Development

With this insight in mind, I set about to review and update our elementary *Teacher-Librarian Resource Book* with several elementary teacher-librarians. I soon realized that the full implementation of the *Partners* vision depended on the involvement of all the partners. At this point I initiated the development of the first truly collaborative and most powerful of a series of 11 documents designed to assist in achieving full implementation and continuance of the vision.

The Partners in Action...Growth Profile (1991) was developed over three years by a team of eight partners. The team included principals, teachers, teacher-librarians, support staff and a professor from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, OISE. The profile defined the stages of development from entry to refined levels for the teacher and the teacher-librarian. It described the refined level for the principal, at the insistence of the principals. They did not want their colleagues doing anything less than their best for the implementation of the vision. This commitment by the principals made a significant difference in the implementation and continuance of *Partners*. Principals were involved at all stages of development, implementation and review. They facilitated implementation within their schools. They assisted with lobbying

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and proposals for system resources and support. They helped to write, validate and workshop the documents.

The first group of the support documents was developed as the result of needs expressed by the *Growth Profile* pilot study teams of teachers, principals and teacher-librarians. As the implementation progressed, teacher-librarians, teachers, principals, support staff and senior administration discovered additional needs for tools to help the implementation.

The *Users' Manual* (1992), the *Principals' Handbook* (1992) and the *Learning to Learn* (1992) documents came directly from the needs expressed by the pilot study teams. One team identified the need for a framework to enable partners to set goals and chart their progress with the growth strands of the profile. They then agreed to help develop the *Users' Manual* to meet this need. From the principal in this team came the identification of the need for and commitment to the development of a *Principals' Handbook*. The purpose would be to articulate the roles, processes and expectations for principal use. Another team of teacher, teacher-librarian and principal saw the need for a fresh approach to information skills and resource based learning. They were prepared to research and help with the development and implementation of *Learning to Learn*.

It was during the development of the *Learning to Learn* document that we realized the need to learn about and integrate the new technologies. Another team of teacher-librarians and support staff who had been working with new technologies agreed to develop *Information Skills: CDROM and Computers* (1993) to supplement and cross-reference with the *Learning to Learn* document.

Several documents were identified by different partners. Senior administration suggested *Teacher-Librarian Orientation* (1993) as a need. I solicited the help of a principal who had shown leadership in this area to help develop and implement the document with new teacher-librarians and principals. *Program Advocacy* (1993) was identified by the elementary teacher-librarians' association as a need and they collaborated with me to develop and implement this manual. *Communications* (1994) was identified as a system need for all educators. Teacher-librarians and principals suggested a skills development manual to assist teacher-librarians in their partnership development. Senior administration expressed the need for teachers to also build their communication skills and so the two versions emerged, one for teacher-librarians and one for teachers.

Literacy had been identified in the review of *The Teacher-Librarian Resource Book* as a section to be developed. The need surfaced again with one of the *Growth Profile* pilot study teams. *Literature and the Learning Program* (1994) finally became a reality when the Ministry of Education released a draft of its new curriculum for grades kindergarten to nine. This *Common Curriculum* gave literature its place in the curriculum. Teachers, teacher-librarians and support staff saw that it was time to articulate how to achieve the partnership for literacy described in the *Growth Profile*.

Accountability: Teacher-Librarian Expectations & Minimum Standards (1995) was developed in draft form by teacher-librarians in response to a senior administration request. This was prompted by a system effort to define accountability for all educator groups. This effort was in direct response to the Ontario Ministry of Education identification of accountability as a priority. The *Accountability* document was also influenced by the development of a Ministry draft document to supplement *Partners in Action*, entitled *Information Literacy and Equitable Access: A Framework for Change* (1994).

The next step in development would be to review the implementation tools. We would have to discard some of them and create some new and very flexible tools to meet the challenge of rapid change.

Implementation

Implementation requires a complex strategy that involves as many stakeholders as possible, in a variety of ways. The goal is to develop a system commitment to the vision that will enable it to evolve with change and survive in some form.

Implementation of the *Partners in Action* support documents was first served by the development process. The involvement of senior administration, support staff, teachers, teacher-librarians, and principals in the collaborative process of initiation, development,

validation, pilot testing, workshopping and facilitating the implementation of the documents went a long way to integrating the vision within system thinking and action.

The second factor in building commitment to the vision was the integration of the implementation initiative with the system curriculum approach and other system initiatives. The idea of developing a growth profile to assist teachers in implementing a curriculum was strongly supported by senior administration and used in several curriculum areas. The development of a guide for principals to a particular program was part of the implementation culture of our board. The development and implementation of the *Literature and the Learning Program* document were done with the primary and junior language documents. Curriculum support staff worked with me to develop and implement all three and to ensure that they were mutually supportive. The *Partners in Action* support documents were integrated with the curriculum change effort in our board of education.

The third key to the effective implementation of the vision was a planned approach that was flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities. Implementation planning involved introducing and providing copies of the documents to all teachers who were interested, and all teacher-librarians. The principals were all introduced to the *Principals's Handbook* by senior administration. The plan also involved:

- system level workshopping of the documents for all who were interested;
- school level workshopping for schools wishing to focus on the implementation of *Partners in Action*;
- small group facilitation of use of a document to set goals, plan, teach or pursue a need stimulated by a document;
- individual coaching, mentoring, and modelling of strategies described in the documents;
- facilitation of individual, group and school efforts with resources, networking opportunities and opportunities to share successes.

Review

The effectiveness of the work towards full implementation increased with the development, implementation and reporting of an action research study, "Investigating the Implementation of Education Ministry Directives: The School Curriculum and the Library Resource Center". This study was designed to review the effectiveness of the *Partners in Action Growth Profile*. With senior administration support I completed this study for my M.Ed. degree over the 1992-93 school year.

I studied ten out of forty elementary schools, selecting a representative cross-section of schools and personnel. I worked intensively with five schools over the course of the year to facilitate the implementation of the *Growth Profile*. The other five schools were introduced to the documents, received copies and were responded to with support if they asked for it. I gathered data from the teams in the intensive schools throughout the year, involving them directly in reflecting on the process and the results. At the end of the year I had all ten schools complete a questionnaire and I compared their program descriptions from 1991- 92 and 1992-93.

The action research process itself was the most valuable tool for effective implementation and continuation. The focussed direction, system and principal support, talk and team effort made a significant difference in the common understanding and implementation of the document and the vision. Factors identified by the participants as most import to the process were, in order of priority:

- talk
- time
- teacher/teacher-librarian partnership
- principal support and guidance
- system support staff mediation of meaning and resources
- structured process of working through the use of the growth profile
- a school culture that supported change

The intensive study teams took ownership in the process and the purpose. They made personal meaning of the experience and were able to incorporate the vision within their own

educational visions. When compared to the five schools that independently implemented the document the intensive study schools showed a far greater depth of understanding, clarity of articulation and commitment to the vision.

Conclusion

The problem with full implementation and continuance is adaptation to rapid external change. The study revealed that full implementation is achievable and how it can best be done, but it also identified the need to quickly adapt and integrate with newer changes. In the intensive study school time was taken to collaboratively integrate the *Partners in Action* changes with several newer program changes that were expected to be implemented. These schools were able to find ways to integrate their change efforts to keep from feeling overwhelmed. The schools without intensive support felt inundated with change and struggled to implement the *Growth Profile* in the face of newer demands from the Ministry of Education and the system.

The problem has since escalated with economic, political and educational power shifts. Our provincial educational system is undergoing major changes. A provincial study of education and the directions it needs to be taking, a completely changed curriculum and a focus on the new technologies are transforming our educational paradigm. The very nature of information and its access is changing and the uncertainty of what it will ultimately look like adds to the problem. The luxury of eight years to methodically implement a vision no longer exists.

We have to learn very quickly to understand the new context, to adapt our vision and to market and implement the vision effectively. I think we must first understand the structure of the new context. Information access is no longer hierarchical. We cannot control and teach about information in the same ways. If we can come to terms with this paradigm shift quickly, we can then rearticulate the vision in the new context, for our own situations and ensure the continuance of an evolving vision.